

BlueDevil II

88th Regional Readiness Command

Winter 2005 Vol. X, No. 3

***Live
Fire***

www.usarc.army.mil/88thrsc/

One word. Leadership. That is what will be needed to deal with the many challenges we will face over the next several years.

From preparing Soldiers to deploy, to taking care of Soldiers and accomplishing missions during the deployment, to recruiting and retaining Soldiers after returning from a deployment, there is not a unit in the 88th Regional Readiness Command that isn't facing significant challenges right now. And what I expect from every officer and NCO out there dealing with those challenges is leadership.

What is leadership?

Leadership is setting the example. You expect your Soldiers to be technically and tactically proficient, to be disciplined, to follow the orders of their leaders. Ensure you do the same.

Leadership is doing the right thing the right way all the time. Not doing the easy thing, not doing what has al-

ways been done, but doing the right thing. It's enforcing uniform standards and discipline so Soldiers coming back from their initial training aren't struck by how different things are in the Reserve. And it's doing the OER and NCOER counseling correctly and doing it in a timely manner.

Leadership is keeping your Soldiers informed. Soldiers who know what is expected of them, who know what the task condition standard are, and who know the mission they are trying to accomplish are much more likely to be energized, engaged Soldiers.

Leadership is making sure your Soldiers are prepared. Get them the training they need to accomplish the missions they will face. Ensure they have the training they need to survive the missions they will face. Make sure they have the schooling they need to be prepared to lead and to get (or keep) their promotion.

Finally, if you have done all this, leadership is trusting your Soldiers to follow thorough on what you have taught them. In the words of

LTC Stanley Bonta, from a 1952 West Point lecture, "Use your people by allowing everyone to do his job. When a subordinate is free to do his job, he perceives this trust and confidence from his superiors and takes more pride in his job, himself, and the organization's goals and objectives. Delegation of sufficient authority and proper use of subordinates helps develop future leaders. This is a moral responsibility of every commander."

Blue Devils!

Maj. Gen. Robert A. Pollmann,
Commander, 88th RRC



From the Top

I am honored and humbled to assume the position and responsibilities as the Command Sergeant Major of the 88th Regional Readiness Command (RRC). Although the name has changed as well as the face, the standards will remain the same.

Moving into this position is like jumping on a train at 90 miles an hour and we will stay the course my predecessor began.

The initial message I want to send Soldiers is to not cut the corners on the standards. Doing things the right way isn't always the easy way. We represent the most respected institution in the world. The generations before us and the generations before them represented the same U.S. Army we represent today. They fought for us, and we are fighting for future generations which will follow us. Live by the Army Values, follow the Soldiers Creed, and if you're a noncommissioned officer, live up to the NCO Creed. In the end you will be successful.

A motto I live by is to "always remember where you came from" and never forget that you were once that

young Soldier, that young sergeant or squad leader. Senior noncommissioned officers, never forget what it felt like to be that private pulling guard duty in the rain in the early hours of the morning, or that young sergeant overloaded with taskings. If they stumble, adjust their load, take a few rocks out of their rucksack and gradually put them back in as they become capable of handling more responsibility.

You don't get anywhere by yourself, and I have had a lot of good mentors who have assisted me over my career. Be that mentor for your Soldiers, and help your Soldiers take pride in their unit. Always have the mind set that whatever unit you're in, that you're serving with the best; I have no doubt that the 88th RRC is the best Regional Readiness Command in the Army Reserve today!

Make a difference everyday!

Command Sgt. Major John W. Vacho,
Command Sergeant Major, 88th RRC



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On the cover

Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Nicholls stays focused during a convoy live fire exercise at Fort Grayling, Mich. (page 10)

Photo by Spc. Michael Weerts

On the back

Morgan Mains, an 88th RRC contractor designed this poster honoring Sgt. Matt Maupin, an 88th RRC Soldier captured April 9, 2004 in Iraq.

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Commentary: When the cavalry really counts

Too often Americans focus on combat losses in Iraq and overlook the long-term benefits of reconstruction projects in scores of Iraqi cities and towns.

The leaders of the 1st Cavalry Division gave testimony at the House Armed Services Committee Nov. 3 about mission successes, especially the rebuilding of infrastructure, during their tenure in Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

Sense of legitimacy

While Soldiers engage and destroy the enemies of the United States in far away lands, destroying the infrastructures of foreign nations is in fact not what American Soldiers do best, nor is it what they aspire to do. One example can be found in Sadr City during 2004, where the 1st Cavalry Division took on the mantle of infrastructure rebuilding oversight that was being carried by their predecessors in theater, the First Armored Division and 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

"I can't describe the scene in Sadr City in December, 2004, when fresh water began flowing from the brand new water network, servicing 100,000 people for the first time ever," said Army Col. Robert Abrams, 1st Cavalry Division chief of staff during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. "This was only one part of the more than \$300 million dollars in large scale infrastructure projects the 1st Cavalry Division oversaw in partnership with USAID and the Iraqi people last year.

"Part of our area of operations included 20 square kilometers of fertile farmland along the Diyala River," said Abrams. "One of my Battalions created an Iraqi farmer's co-op, and oversaw the planting of over 240

tons of seed and influenced thousands of Iraqi's perceptions of the United States by donating tons of humanitarian items such as chickens, beef, sheep, shoes, and heaters directly to the people."

Rebirth of nation, birth of democracy
Iraq's first

post-Saddam Hussein election voter turnout was measured by news services in terms of millions of voters who braved the barrage of insurgents and terrorist car bomb attacks on the voting stations. But there was there was something overlooked on the front pages of the world's media coverage; the many faces of a new Iraqi nation.

"During the elections in January 2005, we worked side by side with Iraqi Election Commission officials throughout every step of the process," said Abrams. "And we always ensured there was an Iraqi face in the front,



Soldiers from the 983rd Engineer Battalion helped with many rebuilding projects in Iraq.

U.S. Army photo

and our Soldiers and junior leaders were right behind them in the background with a large safety net in the event something would be dropped – and things were dropped, but our Soldiers were magnificent, and it was seamless to both the Iraqi people and to the world."

For those who have "bothered to come over there" and have seen what we're doing, they really understand what we're engaged in, said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola, command sergeant major of the 1st Cavalry Division during 2004. "The Soldiers know that what we're doing over there is honorable and just. American Soldiers are "challenged every day, whether they are in training or on deployments, and they always live up to the challenges," said Ciotola. "Our contractors and others who are with us also understand what we're engaged in. Our Soldiers don't just cut down the grass, they plant and replant the grass and help bring life back to the nation."

By Sgt Ken Hall,
ARNEWS, Army News Service

From the editor

The *Blue Devil II* is for Soldiers, DA civilians and family members. We invite readers' views.

Please stay fewer than 150 words and include your name, rank and address. Anonymous letters will generally not be used. We may condense your views because of space. We can't publish or answer every one, but we'll use representative views. Write to: Letters, *Blue Devil II*, 506 Roeder Circle, Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4009, or email: 88PAO@usar.army.mil

Passed the Accident Avoidance Course?

Everyone who drives an Army vehicle must now complete a new online course designed to make people think about driving safer.

Available through the Army Knowledge Online Learning Management Services, the Accident Avoidance Course is mandatory for all Soldiers, civilian employees and contractor employees who drive Army-owned or leased vehicles.

To enroll for the online course, visit Army Knowledge Online, <https://www.us.army.mil>.

Click "Training" under the self-service menu, and then register through the Army's Learning

Management System. In the welcome window, click on "Training Catalog." This opens a search window, where users should enter "Army" in the product name block. Then register for the Army Traffic Safety Program, Accident Avoidance Course for Army Motor Vehicle Drivers.

Users will receive an e-mail confirming registration. To access the online course, open "Registrations" under the welcome ALMS welcome page. Click on "Transcripts," and then click on "Contents." Open "Army POV 1-3" to complete course.

A message from the 88th Regional Readiness Command Safety Office
612-713-3974

Tornado Response

Quartermaster company answers community's call for assistance

A surprising fall tornado turned a typical drill weekend upside down for Soldiers of the 380th Quartermaster Company in Evansville, Ind.

It began when a powerful F3 tornado ripped through the southern Indiana community on Sunday, Nov. 6. The 2 a.m. twister left a path of death and destruction, ultimately killing 23 and injuring more than 200. National Weather Service officials said the tornado was moving unusually fast at upwards of 75 mph; fortunately, the response by the U.S. Army Reserve was just as speedy.

Within seven hours of the tornado touching down, the reserve center received a call from emergency management officials from Vanderburgh County seeking assistance. They wanted to use the center as a Red Cross shelter and possibly get help from the Soldiers as well.

Once it was determined no families under the 88th Regional Readiness Command were seriously affected by the storm, and all their Soldiers were accounted for, the 380th focused on helping their community.

Almost immediately Soldiers began setting up cots and transforming the reserve center into a Red Cross shelter. There was no shortage of help, everyone pitched in.

In the meantime 2nd Lt. Mark Biggs, company commander for the 380th Quartermaster Company, and Randy Muston, the unit administrator for the 380th Quartermaster Battalion, had been in contact with officials determining how else the reserves could help, since much of the local National Guard forces are deployed to Iraq. Biggs and Muston began doing what they could until official clearance was granted; whatever their community needed they were prepared to give, as were the Soldiers of the 380th.

Phillip Webb, the 380th Supervisor Staff Administrator (SSA), began clearing it with headquarters. "I didn't hesitate at all," said Webb, "There were lives at stake."

Department of Defense guidance states that the reserves may only help in state emergencies for no longer than 72 hours and only if it is a matter of life and limb. Everyone knew in this case, it very well could be.

Biggs was prepared; he had already organized his Soldiers and equipment. It had been decided to send them

to the Eastbrook Mobile Home Park which took the brunt of the 200-mph winds and which would eventually yield 18 of the total deaths.

By 10:30 a.m. Soldiers arrived at the mobile home park and were greeted by complete devastation. Mobile homes had been tossed around, twisted, and turned upside down; others had totally disintegrated. Personal effects littered the ground and insulation filled the trees.

The first equipment on site was a water buffalo to provide first responders clean water to drink. Many had been on site for hours searching for any survivors.

"Everything was really coordinated," said Staff Sgt. William Archuletta, noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) at the site and acting first sergeant. "Everyone was grateful we came out to help; our equipment really helped them."

Soldiers of the 380th used their 10-ton and 6-ton fork trucks to lift debris so search and rescue workers could look for possible survivors. Since military equipment is designed for rough terrain, these lifts worked out well for the task at hand. Civilian models would have never made it through the debris.

"Truthfully we didn't have any problems," said Biggs. "Our biggest concern was to keep the equipment off of areas that could have people trapped under them."

A high point came when firefighters discovered a child trapped, but alive. It lifted everyone's spirits, and the work continued as they moved demolished vehicles and debris piles so searchers could clear each affected area.

"Anytime you can find someone alive, it just makes you drive harder to find more," said Archuletta.


As the day turned to night, operations were halted and the local authorities secured the site until the next morning, where the focus of the now-turned recovery phase was on three retention ponds on the south side of the park. Officials had already found five bodies in the water and feared more may be beneath it. Again, the 380th answered the call with pumps and manpower.

Biggs said everyone in the unit volunteered, but they only needed so many people.

"I volunteered to come out here because it's the right thing to do," said Sgt. Jamie Crick, from Nortonville, Ky.

Tornado Response continued page 8

"Anytime you can find someone alive, it just makes you drive harder to find more."



Searchers found a flag in the rubble of the Eastbrook Mobile Home Park and made a makeshift pole so Old Glory would continue to fly.

Tornado Response continued from page 6

“I believe in what we do. We are here for a purpose.”

Spc. John Garrett, a mechanic with the 380th felt good about being able to help the victims and said he would stay two months if he had to.

With core values of duty and self sacrifice running deep, Biggs and 11 other Soldiers returned Monday and set up pumps. A civilian contractor set up on the other end of the pond; both began pumping and it wasn't long before Vanderburgh county sheriffs discovered another body.

The pumping continued through the night. Biggs and his Soldiers set up a small tent. The 380th is a tight-knit unit and the Soldiers looked out for each other as they maintained the pumps and ensured they stayed operational.

Finally, the nine-acre pond was drained late Tuesday evening to a level of only inches. Fire and rescue workers put on waders and walked the entire area of the pond and discovered no other bodies. Everyone had peace of mind; they had done all they could do.



(Left) Members of the 380th Quartermaster Company connect rigid hoses during pumping operations at the Eastbrook Mobile Home Park which was devastated by a F3 tornado. (Background) Members of the 380th Quartermaster Company connect a pump to a Humvee in preparation to move it to a different site on the pond.

Biggs released his Soldiers to go home, clean up and get a good night's sleep; they deserved it. The following day they would be packing everything up and ending operations.

"The Soldiers have done outstanding," said Biggs. "We didn't miss a beat. It may not be what we do on a daily basis, but operating the

equipment is the same no matter what."

"Morale is extremely high," said Biggs, "If I released them now, they would walk out the door, take off their BDUs and return as civilian volunteers."

Members of the 380th Quartermaster Company exemplify the Army Values. Their actions in the wake of the area's worst storm in 30 years is a reminder the Army Values must be lived, not just spoken. ♣

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Craig Pickett,
350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Wanting to ensure their Soldiers were prepared for battle, the 645th Area Support Group worked to provide their Soldiers with additional...

Live Fire Training

In the War on Terrorism front lines have become nonexistent, and supply lines are more vulnerable. Convoys come under attack everyday, and the enemy doesn't differentiate between Soldiers trained as infantrymen and those trained in other Military Occupational Skills (MOSs) -- not that it matters, because every Soldier is a rifleman.

Army Reserve Soldiers receive mandatory convoy live fire training at their mobilization stations before they are sent into theater, but the 645th Area Support Group (ASG) staff felt once was not enough.

"Convoys are where we lose lives."

Leaders in the 645th ASG started planning in June to establish a training environment that was comparable to convoys in theater. "It is the fundamental building block that is comparable to the experience Soldiers will have when in theater," said Col. Harold 'Rocky' Ellens, the 645th ASG Commander. "The question we asked ourselves when we started planning this was, 'Is one time at a mob station enough experience (for Soldiers)?'"

The planning emerged as convoy live fire training ranges were built in October and activated at Fort Grayling, Mich. to give Soldiers familiarity with shooting out of a M998 High-Mobility Multi-

purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) while traveling at moderate to high speeds. Ellens said the more the Soldier is exposed to that type of environment, the more they will be able to use the skills taught during training.

"In our eyes, you can't have enough training," said Ellens. "Our biggest concern is safety. Soldiers must go through a process of pre-training drills before running the course with live rounds."

The course runs 9.9 miles with targets on both sides of the trail, along with wooden clones of vehicles, camels, and Iraqi people dressed in authentic Iraqi clothing. Speakers blasting Ara-

bic music and signs written in Arabic are prevalent throughout the course, giving it a real-life atmosphere.

Soldiers crouch in the back of HMMWVs during the course, with two Soldiers on the right (A-team), and two Soldiers on the left (B-team). When targets appear, the Observer Controller (OC) brings it to the shooters' attention. "Team A, lock and load and prepare to fire," they yell, while holding their SAG (Soldier Attention Getter) stick to make sure that muzzle awareness is followed and the mission is executed as safely and properly as possible.

"After being in Iraq and experiencing attacks on a convoy, this

training brought back a lot of memories and it became surreal," said Staff Sgt. Troy Eisenbach, an OC on the range and an Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veteran.

"Because we are dealing with live ammo, the risk assessment is always high for this kind of training," Eisenbach said. "The OCs had the proper training for safety, and we put people in the right place so we could control any safety issues."

Team A and team B alternate shooting, unloading two 20-round magazines. The focus is to keep their M16 pointed downrange. "We aren't focused on accuracy. We want to make sure they get bullets at the enemy so the enemy keeps their head down and is unable to fire back at the convoy," said Eisenbach.

The 645th ASG took Soldiers who have experienced attacks in Iraq and put them through a thorough screening process; the best of the best were trained to conduct training for Soldiers.

"We brought combat veteran Soldiers who have experienced these types of situations in Iraq," Ellens said. "We want them to talk about different situations and who to turn to when help is needed."

"Convoys are where we lose lives," Ellens added. "This training provides confidence to the



Soldiers and gets them familiar with the M16.”

The OCs are put through the same extensive training they stress to the Soldiers being trained. “When the OCs were trained the emphasis was put on muzzle awareness and on when to shoot and when not to shoot situations,” said 645th ASG Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence May.

Ellens said that Army Reserve Soldiers don’t handle weapons enough to have full confidence and feel comfortable with them.

“We want to give the Soldier confidence,” Ellens explained. “We can’t train for anything when we don’t know what is going to happen, but with extra training, and by establishing a Soldiers confidence, hopefully they will be able to react and execute the mission.”

Before Soldiers go through the live fire exercises, they go through a walk thru, a dry fire and a blank fire. “(Safety) is our num-

ber one concern, but we want to make sure that quality is there as well as the safety,” Ellens said. “Soldiering is a dangerous job and the risk assessment for training is often times high.”

One of the biggest challenges for Ellens was to bring all the resources to Camp Grayling. “It was tough to start something in the beginning of the fiscal year because the budget is not set yet, so that was tough,” Ellens said. “Financing is tough; the 88th RRC has been instrumental in making this work. In the future, visual blasts, gun powder, and training for IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) would be ideal to make it better training and more surreal.”

When the training started, the crawl stage was taken and Soldiers were brought through different aspects of training before being thrown into the live fire. “It started slow, we learned safety and it gradually got us ready for a faster pace,” said

SpC. Timothy Spansail of the 401st Trans Co. “It was good to familiarize myself to fire out of a vehicle at targets.”

The Soldiers’ response to the training has been positive. “Soldiers want to be tested and all of these Soldiers who have run the course brought a serious attitude, and we got a great response,” said May.

“We have very limited time and training is everything” May added. “We can’t waste a minute. We owe it to the Soldiers who put their lives on the line for their country to give them the right amount of training and the right quality. Soldiers want to do hard training. At the end of the day, they are exhausted, but they are smiling.”

Soldiers responded to the training and May says the training is well worth their time. “Training is everything and everything is training,” said May. “This is a great thing for these Soldiers.” ♦

Story and photos by SPC Michael Weerts, 88th RRC PAO

(Background) A convoy drives through a 9.9-mile convoy live fire training course as targets appear on both sides of the road. (Upper left) Soldiers scan their lane while going through a village on the convoy live fire course. (Below) A clone of a camel comes into view as Soldiers scan the field for enemy targets.

Quick fact

One-third of all U.S. casualties in Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom are related to convoy operations

source: www.defense-update.com





Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley,
88th RRC Public Affairs Office

An Army Reserve firefighting unit gained valuable experience and validated their skills as they used an old house for a...

Training Burn

If training saves lives, realistic training saves more lives. And when Sgt. Eric J. Makowski saw the small, yellow dilapidated house on the Mille Lacs Indian reservation the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe he worked for had targeted for demolition, he saw an opportunity for realistic training.

"I looked at the house, and I said 'What a great house for a training burn,'" said Makowski. Instead of demolishing the house with a wrecking ball or a bulldozer, this house could be removed by a fire ... a fire controlled and used for training by the 336th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting).

Soldiers from both the Duluth, Minn. and Sturtevant, Wis. detachments of the 336th gathered to execute a controlled burn training exercise on a cool Saturday in October.

For this training exercise, the 336th would create several fires inside the house and rotate teams inside and out. To make the training as close to real-life fire fighting as possible, boards were placed over the windows to eliminate visibility. Hay was used to fuel the fire because it burns easily and when lit emits large amounts of black smoke, which made the training even more effective.

(Left) Sgt. Lamar Taylor, 336th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting), uses an attack hose to extinguish the fire during a controlled burn exercise in Onamia, Minn. (Right) Pfc. Charreise E. Lewandowski, leads the attack hose with Spc. Gregory Bresnehan, backing her up as they spray the surrounding area so the fire doesn't spread. Both Soldiers are with the 336th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting) conducting a controlled burn exercise in Onamia, Minn.

“You could do training in a classroom, you could do training in a gym, but there is no substitute for the real thing,” said Cpt. Howard J. Aprill, commander of the 336th Engineer Detachment. “There is no substitute for the fire, the smoke, for carrying an air tank on your back while advancing a charged hose into a fire.”

Makowski agreed. “It’s one thing to do training in a simulator, but in a live burn, you’re also dealing with the heat and the smoke; recalling your training in that situation is totally different.”

Thick gray and black smoke curled outside the entrance the team entering the house crawled through. On their knees and staying close to the floor, the Soldiers searched the house and located the fire. Observing the flames, 336th Soldiers monitored and examined the fire and how it reacted and moved within the house structure. The fire was then extinguished to the degree it could be easily started again. The next team moved in after the first left and conducted the same training drill.

“There is no substitute for the fire, the smoke, for carrying an air tank on your back while advancing a charged hose into a fire.”

“We don’t get a whole lot of training opportunities like this, so when we do, we have to make the most of it,” said Sgt. William F. Vanaxen, a firefighter with the 336th. The day before the live fire, the 336th rehearsed and performed “dry runs”, working on basic skills the unit might be rusty on, Vanaxen said.

When any of the teams were inside the house, a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) was standing outside on over watch with an attack hose just in case the team inside needed assistance.

“It’s the built-in redundancy from a safety perspective,” said Aprill. “Today, we have that luxury. When we were in Iraq, we didn’t always have that. Sometimes we had all teams all fire

fighters engaged at the same time.”

The unit deployed to Iraq in January, 2003 and redeployed in February, 2004. On Nov. 2, 2003 the 336th responded to an emergency call of CH-47 Chinook heli-

Training burn continued on page 15





(Background) Spc. Cher R. Tesmar, right, and Spc. Gregory Bresnehan, 336th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting), use a pike pole to push down remaining parts of the house used for a controlled burn exercise in Onamia, Minn.



Training burn

continued from page 13

copter taking hostile fire and crashing in Al Fallujah, Iraq.

“We brought all our extrication tools and we managed to save two Soldiers that day,” said Vanaxen.

The tools used for the rescue, such as the Jaws of Life, were purchased and issued by the 88th Regional Readiness Command right before the unit deployed.


Since the unit’s redeployment, the unit successfully reconstituted and reorganized. This controlled burn was the first time both detachments trained together since the unit deployed.

“This is great. It builds camaraderie, you’re actually doing the job you’re suppose to be doing and you get some experience dealing with the real thing,” said Makowski.

Pfc. Charreise E. Lewandowski and Spc. Gregory Bresnehan, 336th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting), peer through the smoke while waiting to enter a burning house during a training exercise in Onamia, Minn.

Aprill said the training presented opportunities in working on both Soldier and firefighter tasks. “All of these tasks are high pay-off tasks -- you can talk about it on the dry eraser board at the reserve center, but the only way you get proficient at it is to suit up and get dirty,” he said. “That’s our goal here at the end of a drill weekend, to send our Soldiers home dirty and tired. If we do that as leaders, we’ve succeeded.”

When asked if this training will save lives, both of people trapped in a fire and of the firefighters working to save them, Aprill answered “Yes, and yes. It’s the old Army saying, ‘You train like you fight.’ This peacetime training will save lives when we are asked to do it for real.” ♣



Spc. Michael Nuzum, left, works on building shelves for storage as Spc. Duane Moore stabilizes the boards for Nuzum.

U.S. Army photo

Engineers hammer it home

Soldiers from 983rd EN BN overcome obstacles to make mission happen

Company C of the 983rd Engineer Battalion (EN BN) is primarily comprised of skilled civilian carpenters, plumbers and electricians who work hard to be successful in their chosen craft. Given extreme heat, powder-like soil, poor working materials and hazardous duty in Iraq, Soldiers are finding that adapting and overcoming adversity to properly build can be a frustrating experience for perfectionists.

The construction guru's based out of Monclova,

Ohio, have had to adjust basic routine tasks and acclimatize to unusual circumstances since their deployment began last December. With heat reaching approximately 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade during the summer months, a simple task such as pouring cement can become a difficult procedure.

"It is tough to pour cement, especially in the middle of summer," said Company C Commander 1st Lt. Dave Lubke. "We usually pour very early in the morning, but the water and inconsistencies in the con-

crete mixture from one truck to another, coupled with the fact that it dries incredibly fast, will surface cracks, sometimes causing us to re-pour the cement."

From light switches to plumbing supplies, the materials the Soldiers have to work with are of poor quality and are not made for durability. "The plywood layers peel apart and the lumber is warped and twisted," said Lubke. "The material is usually not of good quality and good enough to last only a few years."

Although they are away from American soil, permits must be submitted before the crews can start digging. Permits and codes are followed on any new installation the crew constructs, and new electrical work must follow the European Electrical Code (EEC). "The electrical cables that the Iraqi people previously buried aren't very deep, and we will sometimes dig

Sgt. Alexander Reiner hands care packages to Sgt. Joseph Michalski at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Speicher, Iraq as the 983rd receives their first mail after 30 days in theater.

U.S. Army photo



up unexploded ordinance,” Lubke explained.

On one occasion, Lubke’s Soldiers dug up an old Iraqi ammunition storage facility, uncovering several small rockets and motors. “In one case, a Soldier uncovered an unexploded 500-pound bomb that the U.S. had previously dropped, when he drove over it with a D7 dozer,” Lubke said.

Since being in theater, Company C’s primary mission has been to either close or turn over military bases to the Iraqi military. They have closed or turned over six bases, with the work load generated by each job ranging from slight to a heavy. The work of closing a base involves leveling beams, tearing out HESCOs, spreading the fill, picking up and hauling away concrete barriers and burying or hauling away garbage.

“We spent about a week closing one base down just running our dump trucks back and forth to remove garbage and debris,” Lubke said. “We used a lot of tires during that mission, and some of Soldiers spent a night underneath the stars because it got too late in the evening to go get them.”

Normal equipment and supplies are easy to come by for the Soldiers, but when small excavating equipment (SEE) or a crane breaks down, Lubke starts to cringe. “We’ve had trucks down for about three months because we couldn’t get the parts to fix them,” Lubke said. “We hope those vehicles can stay mission capable for the duration of the deployment.

In April, the 983rd EN BN companies separated to help support different missions, leaving Company C the lone representative of the 983rd EN BN at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Speicher near Tikrit, Iraq. The other companies moved to Fallujah, Iraq and reported to the Marines.

“The communication was tough,” said Lubke. “We have both an unsecured and a secure email system, but

at any given time one or both of them can go down for a few days, and the Digital Non-secure Voice Terminal (DNVT) phone connection usually has a lot of static and can be tough to get through.”

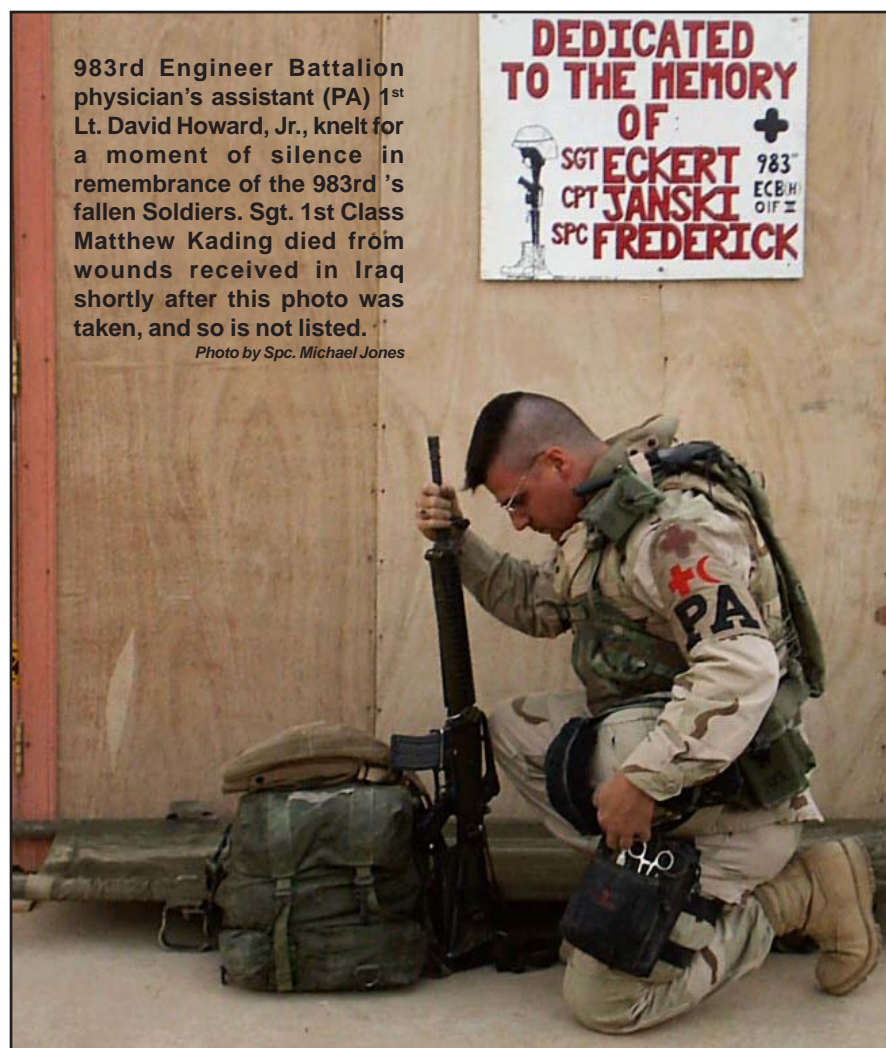
Despite having Sgt Gary ‘Andy’ Eckert, Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Kading and Spc. Kendall Frederick killed in action (Kading died of wounds received in Iraq), Capt. Benjamin Janski who died in a vehicular accident in Iraq, and four other Soldiers wounded in action, the Soldiers morale remained good for the duration of the deployment. “We try to keep our Soldiers busy, but still give them an adequate amount of down time,” said Lubke.

While times have been tough for

Company C, being an engineer company does have its perks. “Our carpenters built all of our office furniture, and reconstructed a gazebo in our courtyard to go along with the horse-shoe pits and volleyball courts that we built,” Lubke said.

Company C met challenges throughout their yearlong deployment but adjusted to each situation and worked around each obstacle that was presented to them. “We had a tough deployment, but we made the most out of it and did some solid work considering the conditions and materials we were given,” said Lubke. “It went by fast but we are glad to be home.” ♣

By SPC Michael Weerts,
88th RRC PAO



CONUS Soldiers prep replacements

The news is full of stories of Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, but you never read about the Soldiers deployed right here at home. For the past year, the 326th CONUS Replacement Battalion from Indianapolis has been deployed to Fort Bliss, Texas, processing individual replacements and civilians for overseas service.

Theirs is an unsung job, but one that is just as important as the war fighter's. They are charged with ensuring every person who walks through their door is medically fit for duty and has been outfitted with the Army's latest equipment.

The battalion is broken down into three companies, each with their own task. The 282nd and 855th Replacement Companies handle all military replacements, while the 823rd Replacement Company takes care of the civilians deploying overseas.

Military replacements receive two weeks of processing. It is comprised of records review, medical and dental screenings, equipment issue, and briefings on a myriad of topics. Also spread throughout the two-week process is military training, to include first aid, weapons, nuclear, chemical and biological (NBC) warfare, land navigation, convoy operations, enemy prisoner handling and traffic control points.

The civilians go through the same process minus military training. They are only introduced to first aid and NBC training to teach them the basics if the need arises.

One of the biggest challenges all the companies face is dealing with varied personalities and levels of experience. By the nature of their business, everyone coming to the 326th is an individual replacement. Therefore, they run the gamut from privates to colonels to doctors or engineers.

Often times the higher ranking replacements want to set their own agenda, or question why they are doing certain things and not others. The NCOs have become adept at respectfully responding.

"I try to be courteous and explain why something has to be done a certain way," said Staff Sgt. Amber Sheller, the 855th operations noncommissioned officer. "If that doesn't (work), I take it up my chain of command."

The time at Fort Bliss has given many soldiers an opportunity to learn and even excel.

"We can depend on the lower enlisted Soldiers to do what needs to be done," said Capt. James Specht, 282nd commander. "They have grown and matured. I saw Soldiers I was hesitant about step up and really take charge."

An example of this is Sgt. Jerry Spindler. He saw a need for additional training for Navy personnel. Many of the sailors have never seen web gear like the load bearing vest or similar items. He organized a class and teaches each cycle of sailors how to assemble and properly wear the army gear.

"Sgt. Spindler has been great," said Lt. Commander Robert Berryman, a Navy Reserve replacement. "He has been helping the junior guys out."


There have been other changes too; changes that only occur when you spend an inordinate amount of time together. "I didn't know everyone at the unit, but once we came down here, we have come together. We're like a family," said Spc. Richard Sigler, with the 282nd.

Sigler has also learned a lot. "Before, I couldn't read an order, but now I can see where someone is going and how long they'll be gone. Sometimes O3s and O4s (captains and majors) will ask me if I know where they're going," he said.

It has been a long year, not as long as a year spent in

Iraq, but long just the same. They have been away from friends, family and home. They will be returning in November and December as another unit picks up the mission and continues to send replacements off to war.

There are rewards however; most Soldiers have had an opportunity to explore the El Paso area and even enjoy shopping trips into Juarez,



Spc. Aimee Colvin, 282nd Replacement Company, assists a sailor with his newly issued field gear at the Central Issuing Facility at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Mexico. Plus home is an easy phone call away.

"The most rewarding part," said Sheller "is seeing the people who redeploy or come back and hear them say how helpful we were getting them ready to go."

Returnees are also amazed at the improvements the 326th has made to the quality of life. The battalion commander, Col. Joy Koester, made it one of her priorities when the battalion took over the mission last fall.

"We have expanded the billeting and given senior NCOs and officers better accommodations, while giving the enlisted Soldiers more room," she said. She also negotiated a contract to have the building cleaned up and painted.

They also put in a wireless internet café which has been a big success. There is a mini shoppette and alterations in the basement, as well as a phone center, library and free washers and dryers. Soldiers do not have to go far to get the necessities or even the treats they need.

The 326th has made every attempt to be a well-rounded

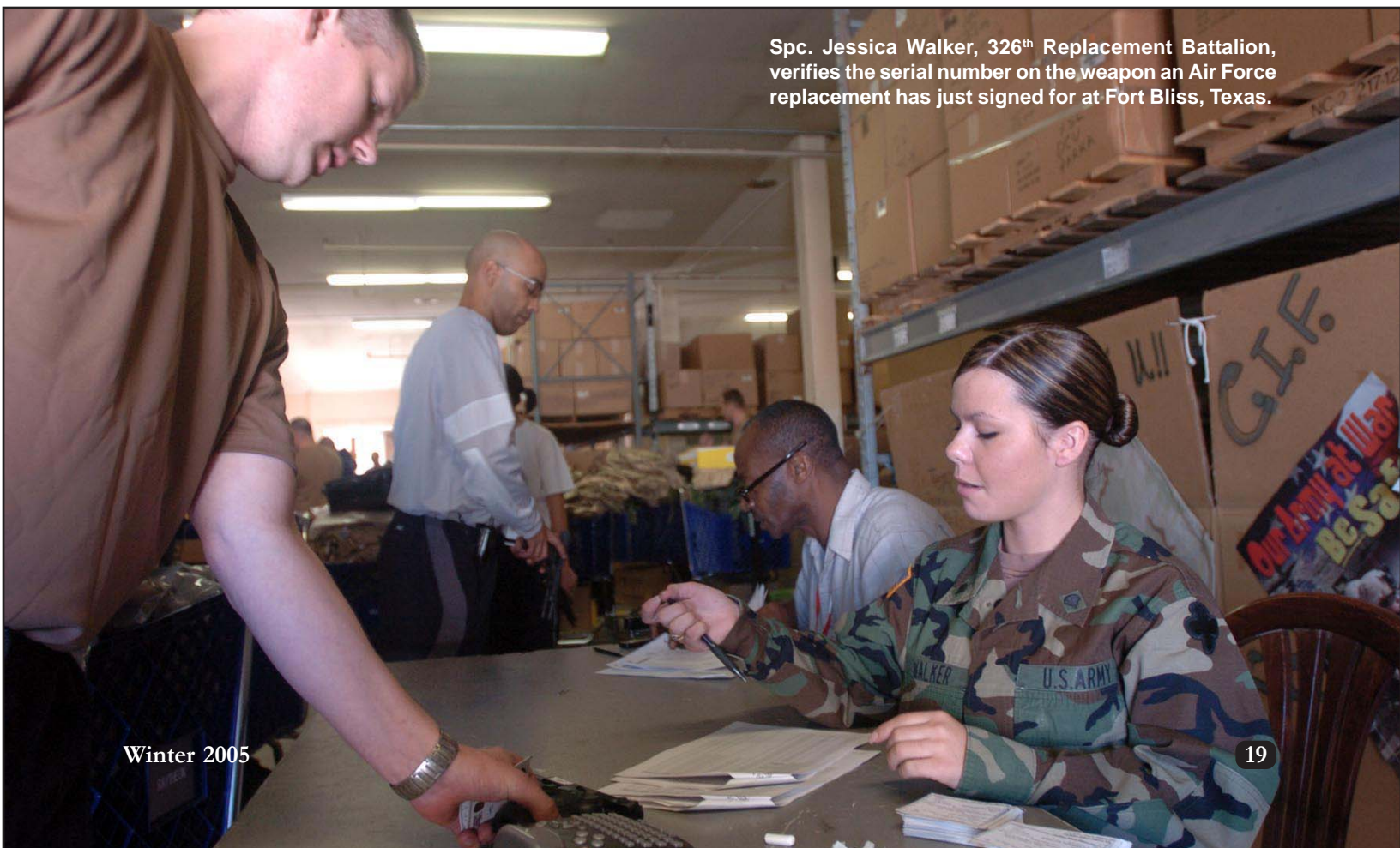


Sgt. Jerry Spindler, 282nd Replacement Company, demonstrates to sailors how to wear the load bearing vest with body armor. Many sailors have not seen the equipment before.

deployment center. They look after the military side of the house in terms of training and look to the personal needs of the individual replacements that are deploying to hostile zones so far from home.

"This is a great mission," said Koester. "The training and the processing we do here is very important. The war fighters over in theater could not do their job if they didn't have the CONUS replacement center." ♦

**Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Craig Pickett,
350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**



Spec. Jessica Walker, 326th Replacement Battalion, verifies the serial number on the weapon an Air Force replacement has just signed for at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Who is the military recruiting?

Break through the myths and get at the facts

Each year, the Services enlist about 180,000 new recruits into the active duty Armed Forces (roughly a quarter million when Reserves are included). There are certain myths about youth who volunteer to serve their country. We dispel those myths with facts that more accurately portray this group of young Americans.

Myth: Military recruits are less educated and have fewer work alternatives.

Fact: Military recruits are far better educated than the general youth population.

More than 90 percent of military recruits possess a high school diploma – only about 75 percent of the youth population does. A traditional high school diploma is the best single predictor of successful adjustment to the military and stick-to-it-iveness. Recruits with a high school diploma have a 70-percent probability of completing a three-year term of enlistment compared with a 50-percent probability for non-graduates. The enlisted recruit benchmark is set at 90 percent high school diploma graduates and the Department of Defense (DoD) has exceeded that level every year since 1983 (Figure 1.)

Myth: The military tends to attract those with lower aptitudes.

Fact: Recruits have a much higher aptitude than the general youth population.

The DoD uses an aptitude test, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) for screening. This test is “normed” to a nationally representative sample of youth. The DoD benchmark for new enlistees scoring

at or above the 50th percentile is 60%, and the Department has met or exceeded that benchmark for every year since 1985 (Chart 1). In 2005, 67% of recruits scored above the 60th percentile; by definition only 50% of American youth did.

Myth: The Military attracts disproportionately from poor or underprivileged youth.

Fact: Military recruits mirror the US population and are solidly middle class.

A recent report by the Heritage Foundation (Figure 2) shows that more recruits are drawn from middle income families, while fewer recruits are drawn from poorer and wealthier families. The percentage point difference in Chart 2 represents the distribution of 1999 recruits minus the distribution of the 18-24 year old population. The chart shows that more recruits are drawn from the middle class and tend to reflect the general 18-24 year-old youth population.

Patterns of recent years reinforce that this trend is continuing (Figure 3)...

Myth: A disproportionate number of military recruits come from urban areas.

Fact: Urban areas are the most underrepresented area among new recruits.

A recent report shows that urban areas are actually underrepresented among new recruits, and both suburban and rural areas are overrepresented.

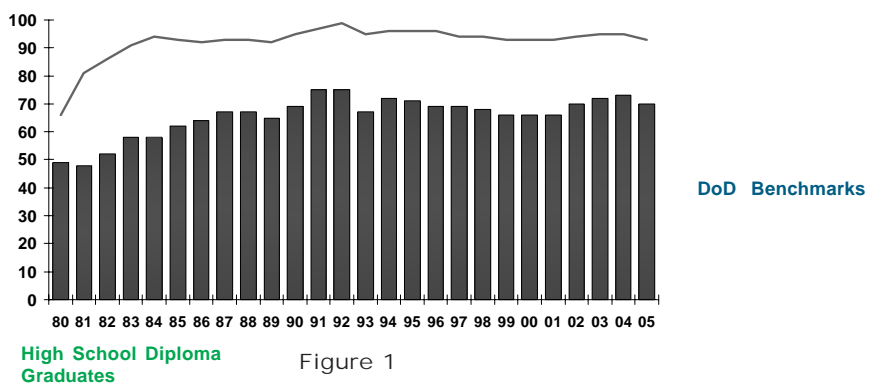
Myth: The Military is not geographically representative of America.

Fact: Military recruits are closely proportionate to the general population.

The southern region of the US generates the most recruits, but also has the greatest density of youth population. The south produces, on average, 41% of all recruits (compared to 36% of the 18-24 year old population). The northeast has 14 % of new recruits (18% of the 18-24 year old population). The west and north central regions produce 21and 24% of all new recruits (accounting for 24% and 23% respectively of the 18-24 year old population).

Myth: The military takes an average or below-average cut of American youth when it comes to medical or physical conditioning.

Fact: About half of today's youth



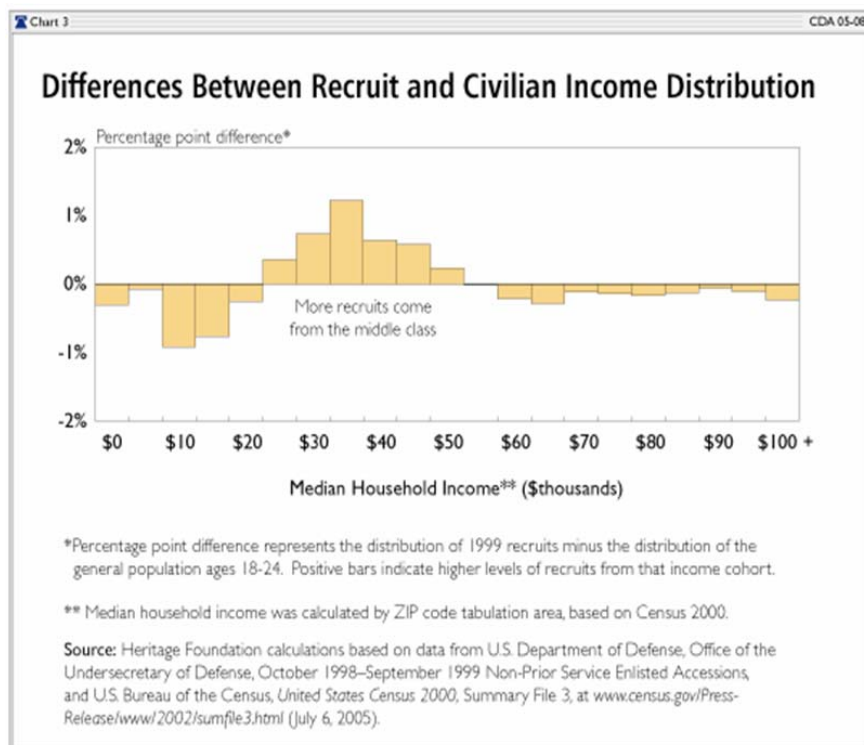


Figure 2

are not medically or physically qualified against current, and necessary, enlistment standards.

Every military recruit is rigorously screened for a variety of medical and physical factors that bear on successful military performance. Some common conditions among today's youth (obesity, asthma, and orthopedic injuries) are disqualifying. DoD must enforce these standards to ensure our forces are able to meet the many demands placed upon them by virtue of worldwide deployments. A challenge to recruiting is that nearly one half of all youth in America are ineligible to enlist for health-related reasons, with significant overweight or obesity as the leading causes.

Myth: The Military is a good alternative for youthful offenders.

Fact: Current enlistment standards bar many individuals from enlisting.

Today's military requires individuals with strong moral character. One underlying purpose of these standards

is to minimize entrance of persons who are likely to become disciplinary problems in units, or security risks. The Services also have a responsibility to parents who expect their sons and daughters will not be placed into close association with persons who have committed serious offenses or whose records show in-grained patterns of misbehavior.

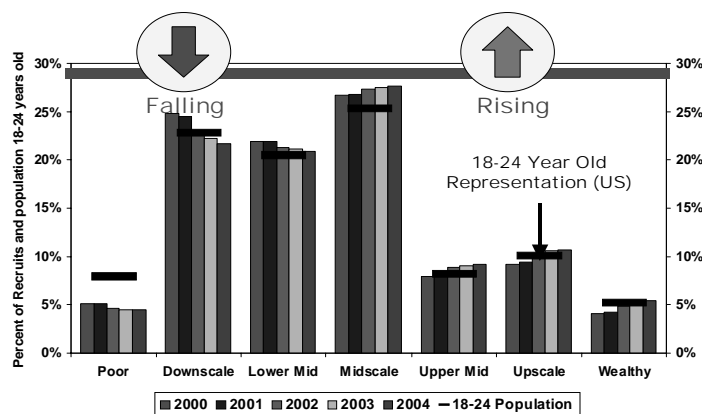
Myth: Incentives and bonuses are not very effective in stimulating recruiting.

Fact: Bonuses and incentives are instrumental to the Services' recruiting efforts.

Studies consistently show that cash or other (e.g., education incentives) are cost-effective in offsetting challenges posed by a strong economy or changing enlistment propensity. The most efficient incentive packages – constantly redesigned – are used by all Services to recruit the right people, at the right time, with the right skills, at the least cost to the taxpayer. Incentives are used to expand the market by motivating otherwise less-interested candidates; to channel or shift enlistments into critical skills with the greatest needs; to encourage specific "terms of enlistment" ranging from 2 to 6 years; and to motivate sooner enlistment when needed to fill empty training seats. The bottom line is that incentives, when applied efficiently, are often the difference between mission failure and success. ♦

Article and graphs by the staff for the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Dr. David Chu

Recruits by Socio/Economic Status
Compared to 18-24 year old population



Source: Socio/Economic Status data – Claritas®
Recruit data – Defense Manpower Data Center

Figure 3

Sergeant Major Team Builder

Soldier skills, networking and discussion topics ranging from the new ACU to mobilization highlight team-building exercise at Fort McCoy

FORT MCCOY, Wis.- “Come a little bit left. A little bit left. You’re right on,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry A. Reick, 472nd Chemical Company command sergeant major, while using the center hold technique with his lensatic compass.

Reick’s instructions were directed to his land navigation partner Command Sergeant Major Charles A. Clark, command sergeant major of the 336th Transportation Group, who was point man while Reick had charge of the compass and map.

Reick, Clark and other command sergeants major (CSMs) and sergeants major (SGMs) of the 88th Regional Readiness Command (RRC), took part in Sergeant Major Team Builder 2005 at Fort McCoy during an August weekend.

For this task, teams of Soldiers searched for four points or markers hidden in a forest area thick with vegetation using a compass, a map and given grid coordinates.

“You can’t get away from knowing the mechanics of how things work, and knowing basically how things work manually, because technology can let you down,” said Reick as he emphasized the importance of getting back to the raw fundamentals of land navigation.

Reick also mentioned that in the desert it’s hard to use a compass because of the changing landscape. As

Soldiers, you never know where you’re going to be deployed or where the next battle field is going to be, so it’s essential to be sharp on all Soldier skills, including map reading and navigation.

Off the side of a path and after a long search, both Clark and Reick found their first elusive point and their next three points were found almost instantly.

“I knew we were going to find it (the first point). I just couldn’t figure why we couldn’t see it,” said Clark. “We didn’t make record time but we found all the points.”

Land Navigation wasn’t the only task the CSMs and SGMs performed on: that task was preceded

by a 5K fun run and 9mm pistol training/firing. Team Builder also provided everyone in attendance an opportunity to network and talk with other CSMs and SGMs.



Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry A. Reick consults his compass to direct his partner in the direction of their next



Command Sgt. Maj. Gerald P. Turpin fires at pop-up targets during the 9mm weapon qualifications event at Fort McCoy, Wis.

On the first night, Command Sgt. Maj. John S. Werner, who at the time was the command sergeant major of the 88th Regional Readiness Command and host of the Blue Devil Team Builder, facilitated a session on topics ranging from mobilization to demobilization to standardized physical training.

One of the hot topics discussed was the fielding of the Army Combat Uniform (ACU). Mobilization stations have been issuing the new digitized uniforms to 88th units that have deployed to Iraq or Afghani-

stan, and the complete fielding for the Army Reserve is scheduled for no later than April 2008.

Werner implored the gathering of CSMs and SGMs to have Soldiers wait until they are issued. Werner was concerned with Soldiers purchasing the new uniform with

"...this is a good opportunity for all of us to get together as a group, get on a single mindset, and find out what the direction of the command is."

their own money, especially lower enlisted Soldiers that don't make a lot of money. Another worry is Soldiers might purchase ACUs that do not conform to Army Regulation 670-1 (Wear and Appearance of The Army Uniform) through unapproved vendors.

Clark, since his enlistment, has been through the field-

Quick fact

Command Sgt. Maj. John Vacho, 88th RRC command sergeant major, has scheduled Sergeant Major Team Builder 2006 for July 29-30 at Fort McCoy. Details coming soon.

source: CSM John Vacho

ing of approximately four different utility uniforms. "They'll come out in due time," said Clark. The new uniform ensemble is approximately \$165.00 and that is a lot of money. "They'll come to the reserve component in due time -- that's what (Werner) was saying last night."

For Reick this was his first time participating in the 88th Regional Readiness Command (RRC) Teambuilder. "I think what I take away is that this is a good opportunity for all of us to get together as a group, get on a single mindset, and find out what the direction of the command is," said Reick. ♣

**Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley,
88th RRC PAO**

Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry A. Reick looks for an elusive marker during a land navigation event at Fort. McCoy, Wis.



Tuition Assistance funding falls short

Soldiers who apply for tuition assistance early, carefully, have best shot at success

When the 2005 fall semester started for college students, more than 700 88th Regional Readiness Command (RRC) Soldiers asked the same question. What happened to my Tuition Assistance (TA)?

The 88th RRC Education Service Specialist, Brenda McCrory explains that the program simply ran out of funds. “We didn’t see this coming at all. It just hit us,” said McCrory. “On Aug. 30 we didn’t have any money to distribute. It was the first time since 2002 that we had to turn down Soldiers for the TA program.”

When the situation became apparent, the 88th RRC distributed an additional \$1 million from the 88th RRC headquarter’s budget to help Soldiers with tuition, but it still wasn’t enough. “We needed about another \$1.5 million,” McCrory said.

Each fiscal year (FY), the 88th

Army Reserve (OCAR), which passes the money to the US Army Reserve Command (USARC). USARC then passes the funds to the Human Resources Command (HRC) in St. Louis to administer the funds for each of the subordinate commands in the Army Reserve.

The FY 2005 budget for the 88th RRC TA program was \$6.7 million. The initial allotment for FY 2006 is \$3 million, and an estimated \$7 million is needed to accommodate all 88th Soldiers. “I was told that additional funding would be received, but not enough to cover all the Soldiers; I’m afraid that we will run into the same situation next fall,” said McCrory. “It is under review, and Soldiers must take notice that new eligibility requirements could take effect starting this summer or earlier.”

In fact, effective Dec. 15 the rules did change.

Due to a continued increase in the demand for TA and based on previous usage, the Army Reserve Education Program (AREP) will not have sufficient funding for FY 2006. The AREP received no additional increase in funding for FY 2006, and Soldier demand for TA is expected to continue to increase. The lack of funding has forced the Army Reserve to limit TA funding to certain Soldiers.

Effective immediately, eligibility for TA for FY 2006 is targeted to educationally unqualified junior officers and NCOs. TA funds will be limited to private - staff sergeant, warrant officer one - warrant officer two, and second lieutenant - captain.

McCrory said Soldiers are starting

to go to drastic lengths to try and get TA. “This program is so important to them, that they will go to extensive lengths, such as whitening out dates and

Quick fact

The 88th RRC Tuition assistance budget increased from \$887,000 in 2001 to \$6,741,000 in 2005, but was still more than \$1.2 million short in 2005

source: 88th RRC Education Office

turning in fraudulent documents.”

McCrory has received many Congressional inquiries from Soldiers contacting their Congressman, but without money to distribute to Soldiers, there is nothing the education office can do. “We explain to Soldiers that they have the right to contact their Congressman to let them know that we aren’t getting the funds,” McCrory said. “But we are not cheating these Soldiers. We know how important this program is and the effect it has on their education. “Many Soldiers came to us and said that their recruiter lied. We can’t speak for (the recruiters), but often times it is selective hearing and the words ‘might’ and ‘should’ often translate into the Soldiers ears that they will get TA, but that is not the case. There isn’t a contract out there that states that Soldiers are guaranteed TA.”

Soldier’s eligibility comes on a first come first-serve basis. It is based on eligibility, school accreditation and availability of funds. “TA is not guaranteed nor is it an entitlement,” said McCrory. “The forms must be filled out correctly and on time.”

The deadline to submit the packet is no later than two weeks prior to

Quick fact

709 88th RRC Soldiers were denied tuition assistance in Fiscal Year 2005 because of a \$1.2 million budget shortfall

source: 88th RRC Education Office

RRC Education Office is given a TA budget that can’t be surpassed. Once the funding is gone, Soldiers’ packets are immediately denied.

The funds go through a lengthy line of departments before it reaches the 88th Educational Office. It starts with the Department of Defense (DOD) distributing TA money to the Department of the Army (DA), which distributes it to various commands, including the Office of the Chief of the

A Soldier takes a test in the 88th Regional Readiness Command Education Office.

Photoshop manipulation of photo by SPC Michael Weerts



the course start date, but it is recommended that Soldiers submit the packet as soon as they register for classes. "Once the packet is submitted correctly, the Soldier is placed in the order that their application is received," McCrory said. "If it is submitted incorrectly, it will be sent back to the Soldier and when it is returned, they will go to the bottom of the list, so they need to make sure they fill it

Quick fact

88th RRC Soldiers applying for tuition assistance has increased from 744 in 2001 to 5,011 in 2005

source: 88th RRC Education Office

out right the first time. If Soldiers want to change a class or drop a class after the packet is turned in, that is all right as long as they contact the education office immediately to initiate a corrected copy of their DD 2171-E."

Upon completion of classes, Soldiers must provide grades to the education office within 30 days following the course completion. If Soldiers receive a failing grade, withdraw from a class, or receive a Not Passed (NP) or an incomplete mark, they will be required to repay the TA, and will not be eligible to receive TA until the full amount is paid.

Soldiers must log on to the U.S. Army HRC website at www.armyreserveeducation.com to start the application. The Army Reserve will pay up to \$250 per semester hour of tuition costs, not to exceed \$4,500 per fiscal year. The TA is authorized on a course-by-course basis prior to the start of the course, including the add-and-drop period.

Soldiers are notified of any changes to the TA program strictly through their Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account. "Soldiers need to check their AKO. That is the only email address that we will send out information to.

Nothing else," said McCrory. "We sent one Soldier a notice on Sept. 9, and he didn't read it until Dec. 4."

TA is only for courses required for completion of a formally declared educational goal, and for Soldiers earning a diploma, certificate, associate, baccalaureate, masters, or their first professional degree.

Soldiers with the pay grade of E-1 to E-6 need to get their commanders approval and a hard copy of the applications must be turned into the education office.

McCrory understands the importance this is to Soldiers and is willing to help walk any Soldier through the process or answer any questions. "They can call the education office at 621-713-1000 at extensions 3081, 3045 and 3719 and we will answer any questions and help them fill out their packet correctly," McCrory encouraged. ♦

**By SPC Michael Weerts,
88th RRC PAO**



Werner salutes as the flag is folded by the 88th Regional Readiness Command Funeral Honors Team for the next of kin.
photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley

Maintain standards

High standards, ensuring Soldiers funeral honors, hallmarks of Werner's tenure

I have lived by the motto that if you quit, you let the opposition win. Unfortunately, that was almost the case when I transferred from a tight knit, highly disciplined, 82nd Airborne Division to the U.S. Army Reserve.

My first drill was a rude awakening. I was disgusted by how unprofessional the unit was run, how Soldiers wore their uniform, their hair length, and by the lack of discipline. I walked around and decided that this was not the Army that I wanted to be a part of, so I decided to leave. On my way out the front door, I ran into my platoon sergeant at the time and he asked me where I was going. I told him that this was not the Army that I wanted to be a part of. He thought a moment and then said, "Yes, you're right, but you can't change it from the outside." I thought about it and decided that he was right.

It was then that I started raising the standards in regards to professionalism and making sure things were done properly and in a military manner. I always insured that my squad, platoon, company or battalion adhered to military standards. I only recruited soldiers who wanted to soldier. People want to be part of an organization they can take pride in and feel they belong to and be willing to make a team effort to set the course and achieve the goal.

I became the 88th RRC's command sergeant major six years ago, serving two more years than the four

year requirement because of the war. With the advent of the war, one of the priorities that I made was to make sure that the funeral honors were up to speed. Casualties are a part of war. Soldiers and their families need to be assured they will be buried as Soldiers. The trust factor is a constant. It must be there, and insuring that funeral honors are done correctly is everyone's business. Being part of the funeral honors team is a tough task to perform as a soldier. To train, plan and coordinate a funeral isn't easy. There are so many factors that go into a funeral, that the process can be difficult. But we perform at the highest level of professionalism and expect nothing less.

The bottom line is that a soldier must be given the a proper burial no matter the circumstances. We owe that much to them.

I came into this job with my eyes wide open and thought I was adequately trained. When I sat down at my desk, I began to wonder what I had gotten myself into. I have been blessed to have people around me that were willing to help me through the learning process and without that I would have never been able to be successful. Without people assisting me, I would have never been able to do my job. No one has been selfish with their knowledge and cooperation. I cannot say enough about those around me. You do not go anywhere by yourself and I have been extraordinarily blessed in that regard.



Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) John Werner
 joined the Army in 1969. *U.S. Army photo*

The soldiers and their welfare have been in the forefront of everything I have been as a noncommissioned officer. If a soldier asks a question, he or she is entitled to a correct, complete answer. Nothing less is acceptable. It may not be the answer they want, but it is an honest answer.

As a leader, in regards to a soldier issue, you should be able to go in and fix it. I have never been able to accept delays. I have never been satisfied with next week or next month, and that has been the biggest eye opener for me. I have learned that you have to check and recheck to insure that a fix is in place. There are always things that I feel that I could have done differently. I have always kept in mind that I am working with people, and every person has a different perspective on an issue. Whether gathering information, or fixing a problem, the most important thing you can do is listen. Listen to what is being said and sometimes what is not being said.

As I have traveled around, the one thing I have constantly marveled at is the diversity of our military. This is our greatest strength in the U.S. military, something that no other nation's military embraces. Everyone comes from a different background, but we all come together, take pride in what we are, put the task at hand and accomplish the common goal. As a youth, you have this romantic notion of what a soldier is. However in reality, it is the opposite. It is a very hard, disciplined life with a lot of hardship and sacrifice, whether it is in combat, training or family. The soldier's family is the first casualty when it comes to war. They suffer the most and having their support is the most important thing to the soldier.

Ever since I was a child, all I have ever wanted to be was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army. During occupational day in fourth grade, I wrote to and received a reply from a sergeant major from the 82nd Airborne Division that I still have to this day. Thirty-six years later, it is tough to leave the one thing that I most wanted to do. Being a citizen soldier is very difficult and if you are doing it for the money, you are doing it for the wrong reason. The military does not pay you enough for the sacrifices that you and your family endure. You do it because you love what you do.

Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) John Werner receives the flag from the 88th Regional Readiness Command Funeral Honors Team and inspects it prior to presenting it to the next of kin.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley



Command Sgt. Maj. (ret.) John Werner realized his childhood dream of being a U.S. Army paratrooper when he joined the 82nd Airborne Division.

U.S. Army photo

There has never been a day that I have not been proud to wear the uniform and to say that I am an American soldier. Thank you for the opportunity to serve with you and my thoughts and prayers go with you always. May God bless you and your families during these difficult times of sacrifice and separation. ♣

Command Sgt. Maj. John Werner (ret.)
former 88th RRC Command Sergeant Major



Army Ambassadors unused resource

What has 24 eyes, 24 ears and 12 mouths? The group of ambassadors for the 88th Regional Readiness Command.

The Army Reserve Ambassador's mission is to serve as the Chief of the Army Reserve's (CAR's) local eyes, ears and voice to promote goals and objectives the CAR identifies as a priority, and to brief civic organizations and key leaders at the state and local level.

Responsibilities of Ambassadors include meeting with 88th RRC Soldiers prior to deployment and at homecoming ceremonies, educating the public about the Army Reserve through speaking engagements, and meeting with politicians to advocate for Army Reserve issues. Ambassador Thomas B. Haugo, for example, recently worked with Minnesota state legislators to fund a trust fund for Minnesota military families.

The 88th Regional Readiness Command's (RRC) Army Reserve Ambassador Program was established in 1998 to create a group of influential volunteers at the state level to promote awareness of the Army Reserve.

The ambassadors are appointed by the CAR for an initial term of three years, with renewable extensions at the approval of the CAR. The nominee cannot be a Soldier in the Army Reserve.

The 88th RRC is constantly looking for candidates. For more information on becoming an ambassador, contact the ambassador coordinator for the 88th RRC, Lt. Col. Andrea Ellis, 88th RRC Deputy Chief of Staff, via email at andrea.ellis@us.army.mil.

The ambassador nominee must be a U.S. citizen of outstanding character, integrity, patriotism, and have an interest in military affairs. The nominee must also be a leader in community affairs, well established in the local community, and in a position to disseminate information about the Army Reserve to a broad cross section of the public in his or her area.

Units can coordinate directly with ambassadors, and are encouraged to invite them to homecomings, Welcome Home Warrior/Citizen ceremonies, Bosslifts, and any other event the unit may be planning. The more the ambassador knows about your unit, the better he can promote the Army Reserve.

Army Ambassadors are an asset. Use them! That's no joke. ♦

By SPC Michael Weerts, 88th RRC PAO

88th Regional Readiness Command Ambassadors

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New Rules to Reinforce Guard, Reserve Reemployment Protections

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16, 2005 – The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is lauding today's Labor Department announcement that it is issuing rules clarifying re-employment rights for citizen-soldiers as a major step forward for Guardsmen, Reservists and their civilian employers.

Labor Secretary Elaine Chao announced final rules interpreting the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act that helps ensure job security for reserve-component members returning to civilian life from military duty.

Speaking at the National Press Club here, Chao noted that this is the first time since the law's passage in 1994 that regulations have been developed to enforce it.

The rules are particularly critical now, she said, when the United States has the largest group of mobilized National Guard and Reserve members since World War II. Since Sept. 11, 2001, almost 530,000 reserve-component members have been mobilized, many for more than a year of duty.

The new rules, drafted in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format, explain how the USERRA law pro-

tections against discrimination and retaliation because of military service and prevents servicemembers from job setbacks due to performing their military obligations. The law also ensures that Guard and Reserve members have ample time to report back to their civilian jobs after completing their military duty.

"Our citizen-soldiers put themselves in harm's way to defend our freedoms, and now it's our turn to be there for them," Chao said. "These regulations will ensure that the seniority, promotion, health care, pensions and other benefits of our citizen-soldiers are protected when they return home to the jobs they left to serve our country."

With more than 50 percent of the military's manpower in the reserve components, employer support is critical to U.S. national security, Palmer said.

But making the relationship work "is not a one-way street," he said, noting that Guardsmen and Reservists also have responsibilities under USERRA.

Among those responsibilities is keeping their employers informed about their military commitments. "We

encourage Guard and Reserve members to communicate early and often with their employers about upcoming military obligations," Palmer said.

Thanks largely to efforts by the Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and solid support from employers, work-related complaints from returning Guard and Reserve members are down 30 percent since their last major deployment, in the early 1990s.

During Operation Desert Storm, one in 54 demobilized troops filed work-related complaints with the Labor Department, officials said. During the war on terror, the rate has dropped to one in 81.

Officials hope this trend will continue and see the new USERRA rules as a big step toward that end.

Other Labor Department initiatives also are expected to help. These include providing briefings to more than 270,000 servicemembers and others about the law, responding to more than 36,000 requests for technical assistance and publishing information about the final notice on the department's Web site. ♦

**By Donna Miles,
American Forces Press Service**

NCO Net Resource for Soldiers

NCO Net is a web-based forum for noncommissioned officers to discuss issues concerning professional development, Soldier development, leadership, TTPs, lessons learned, as well as share tools and ideals on how to solve an issue.

NCO Net provides professional discussion, answers to questions, help finding websites, and opportunities to download software, classes or training aids. It is a way to stay connected to the Noncommissioned Officer community throughout the U.S. Army.

Questions can be answered within minutes by starting a discussion thread with a question.

The vision is to develop a forum for NCOs where they can have discussion, to find files, documents, lesson plans

and tools. Afterward, the member will modify the product and post it back to the website for others to use.

The URL to the site is <https://nconet.bcks.army.mil>. Direct any questions concerning the NCO Net to Mr. Joe Pearson at joe.c.pearson@us.army.mil phone (915) 568-9267 or Mr. Neil Stenzel at neil.o.stenzel@us.army.mil and phone 915-568-8420.

Current members can check out the update site and provide feedback. The site is in the process of being moved to the same network as AKO, which will improve the speed. ♦

Minnesota Citizens Provide Funds for Deployed Soldiers, Families

A non-profit organization has been created to offer financial grants to Soldiers who served during the Global War on Terrorism and to families of Soldiers killed in current operations.

The Minnesotan's Military Appreciation Fund (MMAF) is a state-wide fundraising initiative by Minnesota citizens. Money is distributed to Minnesota military personnel or those who have served with Minnesota military units.

Military personnel who have been deployed to a combat zone since Sep. 11, 2001 may apply for a grant from the MMAF. The grant is not based upon need; it serves as a means to show appreciation to those Minnesota military personnel who served. Soldiers who are Minnesota residents, or are residents of other states and cross leveled to serve with Minnesota units overseas, are eligible to apply for the grant.

The amount of the grant will vary according to the level of hardship endured as a result of combat zone ser-

vice, and ranges from \$250 to \$500 to those who served in combat zone, to between \$2500 to \$10,000 to those wounded in a combat zone. The amount is based on the severity of the injury; families of those killed in combat will receive \$5,000. The amount will also depend upon the overall amount of money the Fund will be able to raise during the year.

Priority for the first payments, which are planned for late 2005, will be given to those applicants who were wounded or killed.

An online application and additional information on the MMAF is available at <http://www.thankmntroops.org> or by writing to:

Minnesotans' Military Appreciation Fund
Post Office Box 2070
Minneapolis, MN 55402 ♣

Mike Walton, 88th RRC Public Affairs Office



DoD Announces Implementation of Traumatic Injury Protection

The Department of Defense announced today the implementation of traumatic injury protection insurance under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program as enacted by section 1032 of Public Law 109-13.

The program, which will be known as TSGLI, is designed to provide financial assistance to service members during their recovery period from a serious traumatic injury.

On Dec. 1, all members eligible for SGLI became insured for traumatic injury protection of up to \$100,000 unless they decline SGLI coverage. A flat monthly premium of \$1 is added to the monthly SGLI deduction, regardless of the amount of SGLI coverage that the member has elected, effective Dec. 1.

TSGLI is not disability compensation and has no effect on entitlement for compensation and pension benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs or disability benefits provided by the Department of Defense. It is an insurance product similar to commercial dismemberment policies.

TSGLI provides money for a loss due to a specific traumatic event while disability compensation is intended to provide ongoing financial support to make up for the loss in income-earning potential due to service-connected injuries.

The retroactive provision of PL 109-13 provides that any service member, who suffers a qualifying loss between Oct. 7, 2001, and Dec. 1, 2005, will receive a benefit under

the TSGLI program if the loss was a direct result of injuries incurred in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Department of Defense developed this program in close coordination with the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will closely monitor implementation with the services and make necessary adjustments if required.

For more information, service members should contact their individual service. Points of contact for service members are: (800) 237-1336 or tsgli@hoffman.army.mil for Army. ♣

Formal EO complaints revisited

Sir/Ma'am, we have a formal Equal Opportunity complaint. Those dreaded words are chilling to any commander; however they shouldn't be. It could be a sign the Soldier feels confident in their chain of command and that the complaint will be addressed. A lack of complaints over time should also be a signal. Perhaps Soldiers feel their concerns won't be addressed, so they talk among peers, and the complaint grows into more than it should. What to do?

First of all, remain focused and address the complaint per the regulation. AR 600-20 Chapter 6, paragraph 6-8 and appendix E must be adhered to. Becoming familiar with the regulation and procedures prior to becoming involved in a complaint is the best course of action. Secondly, and within 72 hours of receipt of the formal complaint, the first general officer with General Courts Martial Convening Authority must be notified. In this case that would be Maj. Gen. Robert A. Pollmann, commander, 88th Regional Readiness Command.

Next, the commander must establish and implement a plan to protect the complainant, any named wit-

nesses, and the alleged perpetrator from acts of reprisal. Many times this step is overlooked by commanders but has become much more of a legally reviewable step.

The plan, at a minimum, must include specified meetings and discussions with the complainant, alleged perpetrator, named witnesses, and selected members of the chain of command and coworkers. These discussions must include the definition of reprisal with examples of such behavior; the Army's policy prohibiting reprisal; the complainant's rights and extent of whistleblower protection afforded complainants, witnesses, and alleged perpetrator under DOD Directive 7050.6; encouragement to all aforementioned individuals to report incidents and/or threats of reprisal; the procedures to report acts and/or threats of reprisal; the consequences of reprisal; possible sanctions against violators; a reminder of the roles and responsibilities of leadership in the protection of all parties involved; the command's support of a thorough, expeditious and unbiased investigation and good faith in attempting to resolve the complaint; and the need to treat

all parties in a professional manner both during and following the conduct of any investigation.

This plan to prevent reprisal during a formal Equal Opportunity complaint sounds complicated but it's not. For the plan not to become an administrative burden, the plan need only consist of a one-page list (in bullet format) of actions to be accomplished (see example). The commander must give a copy of the plan to prevent reprisal to the investigating officer and the Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA). The investigating officer will include the plan as an exhibit in the investigative findings.

Take the time to not only read and review the procedures for addressing formal complaints, but to also seek the advice of EOAs and EO Specialists. They're in place for a reason, and not only should be consulted with, but by regulation must be consulted and involved before, during and after each formal EO complaint.

Contact the 88th RRC EO Specialist, Mr. Rich Cox at 1-800-843-2769 x 13053 for additional information. ♦

Richard (Rich) Cox, Equal Opportunity Specialist, 88th RRC

Commander's Reprisal Prevention Plan Checklist

Name of Complainant _____ Grade/Rank _____ SSN _____

Name of Subject(s) _____ Grade/Rank _____

The Commander or designee took the following actions during and after the investigation process to prevent reprisal against the complainant or subject(s) of the complaint.

- Commander/designee counseled the complainant _____
- Commander/designee counseled the subject(s) of the complaint _____
- Commander/designee counseled the supervisor of the complainant _____
- Commander/designee counseled the supervisor of the subject(s) of the complaint _____
- Commander/designee counseled pertinent individuals _____
- Additional actions taken by Commander/designee to prevent acts of reprisal _____

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U.S. ARMY

WARRIOR ETHOS

I WILL ALWAYS PLACE THE MISSION FIRST.
I WILL NEVER ACCEPT DEFEAT.
I WILL NEVER QUIT.

STATUS:
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APRIL 9, 2004



SGT. KEITH (MATT) MAUPIN, 20, BATAVIA, OHIO
724TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, U.S. ARMY RESERVE

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